

April 1994

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Recommended Citation

Leonhardt, Tom (1994) "Letter from Oklahoma / Human Rights, ALA, and Publishers' Catalogues," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 6: Iss. 2, Article 12.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1464>

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Letter from Oklahoma

Human Rights, ALA, and Publishers' Catalogues
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The other day I was talking with my friend Beanie, who is not a librarian. He was asking about the trips I take to attend ALA conferences. This was a novelty to him because his job doesn't call for any travel for any reason. After I convinced him that librarians don't wear crazy hats and march in parades at our meetings, I began mentioning some of my favorite cities of past conferences and spoke longingly of those coming up in the next few years: San Antonio, New Orleans, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and San Francisco.

I said that Philadelphia was coming up soon (sooner than I realized) and that I was really looking forward to seeing it. I had visited Philly once with Nick Masi, a friend from Basic Training in Ft. Dix, New Jersey. He lived on the South Side on Bouvier Street. How do I remember? I don't know except that it was the maiden name of the then first lady. You could look it up. But I digress.

Beanie asked me about other cities and I had to explain that although many cities have enough hotel rooms for ALA meetings, few have enough meeting rooms, about one room for every ten registrants. We are a close group. But if we aren't careful, we won't be able to go on meeting that way. Mark my words.

I couldn't help but tell Beanie that cities in Colorado and Ohio (or was it only Denver and Cincinnati?) were verboten as Chicago had been during the ERA debate (he had to be reminded, as a baseball fan and not very politically astute, that I was not talking about the relative pitching merits of the Cubs and the White Sox). Oh, and Phoenix was scheduled and dropped before Martin Luther King's birthday became an Arizona holiday (it did, didn't it?).

Yes, I told him, we are meeting in Chicago again and save a lot of money by doing so because our headquarters is in Chicago. Beanie suggested that we should have moved our headquarters because of ERA, not to mention the Cubs. Before I could rebut that twisted bit of logic and defend the Cubs, he asked where we (ACRL; actually) went when Phoenix burned to ashes. I, still recover-

ing from the flu and bronchitis, went into a coughing paroxysm. When I recovered he regained his train of thought and asked me again.

"We [ACRL, actually] moved the conference to Salt Lake City," I said, trying to sound nonchalant and hoping that he would move on to something else.

Beanie looked at me with a bemused expression. "You mean Salt Lake City, Utah? Where the Mormon Tabernacle is? Where those guys have lots of wives and African Americans can't be bishops?"

"Wait," I said. First of all, polygamy is outlawed and African Americans can be something close to bishops and things are different now than they were before. On the other hand," I admitted, "we never would have met there during the ERA debates. Besides, Salt Lake City doesn't have a major league baseball team."

Beanie then asked about Cincinnati and Denver. I couldn't remember what Colorado had done but I had the news release announcing the decision not to hold the ALA midwinter meeting in Cincinnati so I showed it to him.

Beanie read aloud from the press release: "The board action continues ALA's long tradition of support for equal rights and intellectual freedom," said ALA President Hardy R. Franklin. "We feel the passage of Issue 3 in Cincinnati violates basic human rights issues." Paul Graller, ALA conference services director, said that the Association will be liable for an estimated \$200,000 in hotel contracts with the Cincinnati cancellation. But, Franklin said, "You can't put a price tag on human rights. The issue is not special rights for a few but equal rights for all."

Beanie looked more puzzled than ever. "You guys, oops, sorry, you librarians believe in equal rights for all and intellectual freedom even when it's pornographic but when a city or a state passes a law that you librarians don't like, you cancel contracts and move to another state and city for your conference."

It was then that the phone rang. Saved by the bell. By the time I was finished,



Beanie had gone home to watch a slam dunk contest and I didn't have to let him know that I was puzzled, frustrated, and angry by these actions as are most of the people that I associate with at ALA meetings.

I see in the March 1994 *American Libraries* that the post brought today that I and my friends are not alone. There are three letters to the editor questioning the decision to forfeit \$200,000 to \$400,000 for saying no to Cincinnati. So we made our point; that and \$1.50 will get us a cup of coffee in most exhibit halls in the U.S. I don't know what a cup of coffee (Ersatz) will cost in Cuba (nylons, chocolate, cigarettes) but I am sure that some of our (ALA, that is) money will make its way into Fidel's coffers. Librarians are known to be left of center but there are times when even liberals must draw a line. Bob Dylan summed it up nicely when he crooned, "I am liberal to a degree, I want everyone to be free, but if you think that I'll let Barry Goldwater move in next door and marry my daughter, you must think I'm crazy."

Let's keep official ALA dollars here even if it means that ALA cannot be represented there. In fact, given our official absence from Phoenix, Denver, and Cincinnati, isn't it a given that we (ALA, that is) will go so far as to forfeit hotel reservations deposits in order to make a statement. After all, you can't put too high a price on human rights.

And P.S on Publishers' Catalogues

The post, in addition to *American Libraries*, brought some lovely publishers' catalogues, spelled the French way

for emphasis on the artistry that goes into many of them. A case in point is the **Northland** Spring 1994 offering. The color photographs inside the catalogue are an attractive means to advertise the beautiful books that they publish. Ever since driving through Flagstaff in the winter I have wanted to return for a real visit and not necessarily for skiing. Before returning I will read *Mountain Town: Flagstaff's First Century*, by Platt Cline, a writer and publisher of the *Cococino Sun*. The book was due in January 1994 "in time for the centennial celebration of Flagstaff's founding. . ."

Staying out west (midwest catalogues just don't compare), my eye was caught by the inside cover of the **University of Nevada Press** Spring and Summer 1994 catalogue. There are three photographs from Neon Nevada with text and photographs by Sheila Swan and Peter Laufer. Lili Lakich, Founding Director, Museum of Neon Art in Los Angeles (I wish I had known this before Midwinter met in L.A.) suggests, in a pitch for the book, that, "As artifacts of American culture, neon signs illuminate our character and history." The rest of the catalogue is three-color, subdued and as attractive as the books are interesting.

The logo is a kiwi bird within a ring, looking like an exotic china plate. Below the bird are the initials "KiWi". The catalogue is *Neue Buecher Fruehjahr 1994* Kiepenheuer & Witsch. Inside, sixteen paperback (auf Deutsch, Paperback) books are introduced on sixteen pages. On each page you will find a picture of each book's front cover, a photograph of each author along with a biographical sketch, quotes about the book, and a brief synopsis (Kurztext) of the plot. KiWi publishes fiction and non-fiction by German authors and some translations, including two in this catalogue, one by Ignazio Silone, *Severina*, and one by R.D. Laing, *Liebst du mich?* In another spring 1994 catalogue of KiWi books we find mostly hardbacks (Gebunden) including one called *Aimee & Jaguar: Eine Liebesgeschichte*, Berlin 1943. This book tells the story of Lilly Wust (29 in 1942), now in her 80s, and Felice Schragenheim (23 in 1942). Lilly was a housewife with four sons and a husband in the Reichswehr. They meet, fall in love, and in 1943 Lilly (Aimee) moves in with Felice (Jaguar). Jaguar is a Jew living underground in Berlin. In 1944 she is captured by the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp. The last words from Felice are written from a concentration

camp, Grosse-Rosen, in 1945: I thank you a thousandfold for everything, always think of me. I can really use the things [you sent me] because I am always outside and it is 15 degrees below freezing. It is hard to believe what it is like without a coat and long pants. I love you very much. All my love to you, your parents, the boys. Kisses. Kisses. Kisses from Jaguar."

The University of Georgia Press Books for Spring 1994 is undistinguished in design and artwork but it offers some interesting titles for sale. On page 9 for example, a new paperback mystery by D.J.H. Jones caught my attention: *Murder at the MLA*. "With numerous twists of plot and an affectionate evocation of Chicago, the City That Hates Wimps, Murder at the MLA is at once a deftly designed mystery and a rambunctious satire of today's academy." I can hardly wait to read it and I can hardly help but wonder why we don't lose a few librarians when we gather in Chicago. The really good news to be found in the catalogue is that the G=University of Georgia Press will be publishing new editions of Erskine Caldwell's greatest works. Caldwell (1903-1987) was born the son of an itinerant Presbyterian preacher and a schoolteacher in Newnan, Georgia. If you have not read Erskine Caldwell, you are missing a real treat. Rightfully so, the Georgia Press begins its Brown Thrasher Book series of Caldwell works with *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre*. "First published in

1933, *God's Little Acre* was censured by the Georgia Literary Commission, banned in Boston, and once led the all-time bestseller list, with more than ten million copies in print." Caldwell wrote some wonderful short stories, too, so wonderful and sensuous that we used to read them to each other in high school, especially the one about a hanging and a butcher chewing tobacco in his butcher shop. I won't say more and I can't remember the title but I am sure it will reappear in a future Brown Thrasher Book.

Norton Spring 1994 is even less distinguished in its design and artwork than the University of Georgia but one soon forgets about the aesthetics of the catalogue when one browses the pages. Norton is reissuing the complete poems of e.e. cummings for his centennial year. This is the "most complete, textually accurate edition of Cummings's poetry ever published." Across from mr. cummings is a picture of Patrick O'Brian and a description of *The Golden Ocean*, a background novel to O'Brian's first in a series of British navy stories. And if you want to know more about O'Brian and his books, just below the announcement of the novel is an announcement of *Patrick O'Brian: Critical Essays and a Bibliography*, edited by Arthur Cunningham. And if you are a really big fan of O'Brian, turn to page 43 and you'll find a description of *The Patrick O'Brian 1995 Calendar*, with illustrations by Geoff Hunt. €

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